

Submission to the Redress Scheme

Alison Quigley

Tuesday February 28, 2023

Thank you for considering this submission one day after due date.

1. I am a survivor of CSA in gymnastics, now undertaking a doctorate in law studying child-safe policies in Australian gymnastics. I'm also a sport representative for the National Office for Child Safety National Advisory Group. I work for advocates who have been abused in sport through the NFP Athlete Rights Australia. I am not a first nations person or someone with a disability but would like to contribute to this inquiry and note that Point 5 seems to invite a wider scope.
2. Point 5: "The performance and effectiveness of support services for Scheme applicants, including accessibility and resourcing and funding levels."
3. In what follows, I describe my experience with redress. This is not a criticism of the "support services"- the focus is on the accessibility aspect of the TORs.
4. The man who offended against me was imprisoned in 2017. It happened while I was a young athlete under the care and supervision of a club under the Gymnastics Australia umbrella. In 2020 I noticed the leadership of GA, headed up by CEO Kitty Chiller, had represented, in the GA Annual Report for 2020, that GA was on-boarding with the NRS. On the strength of this, I applied for redress in July 2021. It was reasonable to expect GA would sign on – ninety per cent of participants are aged under 12, there are over 220,000 children enrolled, and prevalence studies show the majority onset age is between nine and ten years old.
5. I thought it would only take six months for GA to complete the on-boarding process. GA's annual reports represented they were solvent and I supposed the organisation could afford to sign on. Literature on this point tells us that three to six months is the average time period for sign on.
6. In my work as an advocate for athletes suffering abuse in the sport, I was in regular contact with GA. I didn't disclose I was an applicant.
7. After the six-month waiting period had finished, I assumed the government would dock the funding of the organisation for not signing up. This was the stated policy that Ann Ruston had set up in the previous year. I expected a provision to be triggered, or at the very least, some pressure brought to bear on GA for not signing up.
8. Instead there was a lot of silence. I wrote several times to NRS admin asking for updates. I couldn't get any answers. By March of 2022 I had contacted Gymnastics Australia, told them I was an applicant and that I was going to write an article for a law journal about the operation of the NRS in relation to sporting organisations. In this period, the GA integrity manager did not explain why they were late to sign on. I wondered if that was because provisions in the NRS prohibited them from explaining causes. If so, I submit this is not an effective policy for survivors. It goes against principles of transparency that survivors so desperately need to see operating in this space.
9. I published the article in the law journal. GA still did not respond with an explanation for the delay. Months passed. Every time I got a call from the NRS I assumed it was to tell me something had changed.
10. Eventually, Kitty Chiller resigned GA and moved on a public service job with the National Sports Tribunal.

11. For this entire period, the leadership did not explain why GA represented in the 2020 annual report that it was on-boarding. I would like GA to explain to me whether it was true they had signed on, whether that had been a misrepresentation, and, if so, the actions that NRS will undertake to prevent this happening to others in the future.

12. As a point of practicality, I wonder why organisations don't offer a progress bar or transparent "bead counter" diagram on their website to provide people with reassurance the club or organisation is progressing towards sign on. There are eight steps they need to take – could we have eight waypoints as progress indicators? The lack of transparency puts the survivor in the same "loss of control" mindset that they went through when they were being abused.

13. More recently I set up a parliamentary petition and secured over 590 signatures to enjoin GA sign up or have their funding docked (EN4498). This was late last year. It has gone through the petition process and to date I've received no reply. Is this system broken too?

14. It was another level of stress circulating the petition in the hope something might change. It appears nothing has shifted.

15. In a recent conversation with a high-ranking sports administrator I was told that "redress doesn't suit sport. We just don't have the money. We can offer other things, like counselling and an apology. That's it." To what degree is this true? If it is true, why is Funder of Last Resort not being used in my case?

16. It is now *nearly two years* since I applied. Could we please consider next steps? For me and all those other survivors thinking to come after me? For my own case – and for the sake of those after me – could we please see: i) the system communicating to me what has been going on; ii) GA communicating to the public the same iii) GA explaining the discrepancy in the representation in point 4 and iv) an NRS administrator flipping the switch over to Funder of Last Resort if GA truly has no capacity to sign on.

17. I wanted to be an ambassador for this scheme because I am a strong supporter of the Royal Commission and its outcomes. However, if the scheme sets up false hope, then it needs to be restructured/redesigned.

18. My recommendations are for enhanced transparency, an audit on the delays, and speedier decisions on Funder of Last Resort. Leaders should held accountable for what they say about the progress of redress in their organisation. I'd like to see company fines for false representations – to falsely represent you're doing the right thing is a form of company misrepresentation that is particularly odious, especially when the harm falls on survivors already made vulnerable from the initial abuse.

19. Thank you for instigating the inquiry. I look forward to reading the outcomes.

All the best,

Ali Quigley.